# 2021 VICTORIAN EARLY YEARS AWARDS INFORMATION PACK

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# The Victorian Early Years Awards

## What are the Victorian Early Years Awards and why should I nominate?

The Victorian Early Years Awards (VEYA) celebrate leadership, outstanding achievement, exceptional dedication and innovation in improving outcomes for children aged birth to eight years and their families.

With the roll out of three year old kindergarten underway, there has never been a better time to recognise and celebrate the great work happening every day in the early childhood sector.

You can nominate yourself or your colleagues to win grants of up to $15,000 to support your nominated activity or professional development. Winners are recognised as the best in Victoria for their category and go on to develop and share their inspiring work with their communities.

The seven award categories focus on improving engagement in learning, supporting parents, building collaborative community partnerships, improving child health and wellbeing, exemplary practice in early childhood education, leadership and significant service improvement.

The finalists in each category are also eligible to win the prestigious Minister’s Award, selected by the Minister for Early Childhood.

This Information Pack provides all the information you need to nominate yourself or someone else for the awards.

You can find further information, including the profiles of previous VEYA winners, on the website: [VEYA website](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/Pages/eyawards.aspx)

# Key dates

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Nominations open** | Monday 3 May 2021 |
| **Nominations close** | ~~11.59pm Monday 14 June 2021~~  Closing date has been extended to  11.59pm Thursday 24 June 2021 |
| **Judging process commences** | Week commencing 29 June 2021 |
| **Finalists contacted** | Week commencing 31 August 2021 |
| **Award presentation** | Wednesday 10 November 2021 |

# Award categories

There are seven award categories in the 2021 Victorian Early Years Awards.

#### ****Improving Access and Participation in Early Learning****

This award recognises one or more early childhood services and/or organisations that are taking action to promote access, ongoing participation and engagement in early learning, particularly for families experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage.

#### ****Supporting Parents to Build Their Capacity and Confidence****

This award recognises one or more early childhood services and/or organisations that are taking action to support families, parents and carers to feel confident and capable in their parenting role and recognises their role as the first and most important teachers in supporting their child’s learning and development.

#### Creating Collaborative Community Partnerships

This award recognises a collaborative partnership between two or more early childhood services and/or organisations that are taking action to promote collaborative practice that supports and demonstrate positive outcomes for children and families.

#### Promoting Children’s Health and Wellbeing

This award recognises one or more early childhood services and/or organisations that are taking action to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for young children.

#### Continuity of Early Learning

This award recognises two or more early childhood services, schools and/or other organisations that support continuity of early learning through successful transitions.

#### Early Childhood Teacher of the Year

This award recognises an early childhood teacher who has demonstrated evidence-based innovation and exemplary practice in early childhood education and care. Their nomination will demonstrate how they have made a significant contribution to the development and delivery of high-quality early childhood education programs and/or achieved significant improvements in children’s learning and development outcomes.

#### The Emeritus Professor Collette Tayler Excellence in Educational Leadership Award

This award recognises an educational leader, early childhood service, or an approved service provider that has led their educators and teachers to significantly improve the quality of their learning and teaching practices, with a focus on intentional teaching practices to achieve improved outcomes for Victorian children and their families.

#### The Minister’s Award

This is awarded by the Minister for Education from the pool of finalists for an application that demonstrates exemplary practice and exceptional achievement in improving outcomes for young children.

Finalists of each award category are automatically eligible for the Minister’s Award, which is selected by the Minister for Early Childhood. Applicants do not need to specifically nominate for this category.

# How to nominate for an award

All applications for the 2021 VEYA need to be made online via [the VEYA nomination platform](https://earlyyears.awardsplatform.com/).

No late nominations will be accepted. Please allow adequate time to complete and seek endorsements for applications.

### Nominating yourself or your early childhood service / organisation

1. Visit the [VEYA nomination platform](https://earlyyears.awardsplatform.com/) (first-time users will need to register their details).
2. Click on ‘Start an application’ to begin.
   * Under ‘category’, select ‘I’m nominating myself for’ and then select the relevant award category.
   * In the ‘nomination name’ field – enter your initiative name or early childhood service/ organisation name.

Note: The only categories where an individual name is permitted in this field are the Early Childhood Teacher of the Year Award and The Emeritus Professor Collette Tayler Excellence in Educational Leadership Award.

* + Enter your Local Government Area and corresponding Region
  + Click on ‘Save + next’.

1. Complete all relevant field in the application form and click on ‘Submit’.

Your application will automatically be sent to your listed service provider/coordinator or Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent) for their endorsement. You should ensure that they have approved your application by 11.59pm Thursday 24 June 2021 (the closing date for applications).

### Nominating a colleague or an early childhood service/ organisation

1. Visit the [VEYA nomination platform](https://earlyyears.awardsplatform.com/) (first-time users will need to register their details).
2. Click on ‘Start an application’ to begin.
   * Under ‘category’, select ‘I’m nominating someone else’ and then select the relevant award category.
   * In the ‘nomination name’ field – enter their initiative name or early childhood service/ organisation name.

Note: The only categories where an individual name is permitted in this field are the Early Childhood Teacher of the Year Award and The Emeritus Professor Collette Tayler Excellence in Educational Leadership Award.

1. In the ‘Nominator details’ tab, you will be asked to provide your contact details and provide a short statement (non-scored) explaining why you would like them to win an award.
2. In the ‘Nominee’s details’ tab, you will be asked to provide contact details for your chosen nominee. As your nominated colleague or early childhood service/organisation will receive an email from us confirming the nomination, you may wish to inform them to expect our email.
3. After you have reviewed and submitted the application, an email will be sent to your nominee inviting them to complete the selection criteria and accept the nomination by 11.59pm 24 June 2021 (the closing date for applications). They will also be asked to include a second referee, of which one must be their service/service provider director or Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent).
4. When your nominee has completed their selection criteria and submitted the form, their nomination will be sent automatically to their early childhood service/ service provider director or Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent) for endorsement. Your nominee must ensure that this step is completed, or the nomination will not proceed.
5. You may be contacted as a referee if the nomination progresses as a shortlisted finalist.

# Referees and endorsement

All nominations must be supported by two referees. Please note that one of your referees must be a service provider/coordinator or Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent).

If you are nominating yourself, you must still include two referees. You can’t be a referee for yourself if you’re nominating yourself.

If you are nominating someone else, you will be the first referee and the nominee will be asked to submit a second referee.

When including referees in your nomination, you should:

* + discuss the nomination with them to make sure they are comfortable with you including their details
  + make them aware that they may be contacted if your nomination progresses as a shortlisted finalist.

Once your nomination has been submitted, it will automatically be sent to your service provider/coordinator or Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent). They will need to endorse your nomination before 11.59pm Thursday 24 June 2021 for the nomination to be successfully submitted.

**Applications that do not meet these requirements will be ineligible for judging**.

# Selection criteria and eligibility requirements

## Improving Access and Participation in Early Learning Award

This award recognises **one or more** early childhood services and/or organisations that are taking action to promote access, ongoing participation and engagement in early learning, particularly for families experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage.

For example, initiatives may have a focus on:

* supporting families to engage with early learning services, including supporting families to engage in learning from home
* improving access to high-quality early learning services for children
* promoting engagement with early learning for children, particularly for those experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage
* supporting early intervention approaches that support better learning outcomes for children
* evidence-based practice changes that ensure services are responsive to a diverse range of families (for example, Aboriginal families, culturally and linguistically diverse families, children with developmental delay or disability).

The winner of this Award receives a grant of $15,000 towards their project or initiative.

*The winner of the* ***2020 Improving Access and Participation in Early Learning Award*** *was Curious Young Minds Early STEM Literacy Program – Ardoch. Learn more about Ardoch here:* [*https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/Pages/veya-winners-2020.aspx*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/Pages/veya-winners-2020.aspx)

#### Eligibility

This award is open to **one or more** early childhood organisations and services delivering projects, programs and initiatives that are improving outcomes for young children and their families.

Eligible organisations may include (but are not limited to):

* early childhood education and care services and Early Years Management organisations
* primary schools
* local government services (e.g. family services, maternal and child health services)
* playgroups
* Best Start partnerships
* parenting services
* Aboriginal health organisations or cooperatives
* community service organisations and community health organisations.

Please note individuals are not eligible for this award category.

#### Selection Criteria

**Criterion 1: Outcomes for children and families**

How does the initiative improve outcomes for children and families?

Consider:

* Has the initiative been evaluated?
* How has the initiative improved outcomes for all children and families?
* How has the initiative improved outcomes for families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage?
* How does the initiative build the capacity of children, families, communities and/or organisations to support positive outcomes for children?

**Criterion 2: Evidence-based practice**

How does the initiative promote evidence-based practice?

Consider:

* What is the evidence base (theories and/or research) for the initiative?
* How is the initiative monitored to ensure ongoing quality improvement?

**Criterion 3: Innovative practice**

How does the initiative promote innovative practice?

Consider:

* How is the initiative different to expected everyday practice?
* How is the initiative demonstrating innovation in your local area?

**Criterion 4: Sustainability**

How is the initiative sustainable and transferable?

Consider:

* How is the initiative embedded into everyday practice?

#### How the judges will evaluate the applications

* The judges will look for clear and relevant examples of how the initiative demonstrates the key criteria of this award category.
* The judges will consider and review any independent evidence or research you provide in your application that shows why and how the initiative is a success.
* As the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) underpins all Victorian early childhood learning, you should reference how the initiative supports and implements the VEYLDF and its practice principles.
* The initiative should be more than just business as usual and be something innovative or ‘out of the box’.

**Here are some of the judges’ comments from last year’s Awards. These may help you in preparing your application.**

* *The project has strong evidence of theoretical frameworks and in-built improvement.*
* *Designed evaluation indicates a positive outcome for children within the project.*
* *The program overall is scale-able to other locations in Victoria.*
* *The project strongly draws on the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) and culturally relevant pedagogy, marrying the two approaches to ensure cultural inclusion*.

#### Application components

**There are three parts to the application:**

**Part One - Overview**: With a 400-word limit, the overview is not scored but should identify when the program commenced, how it links with the evidence base, key stages and achievements, community engagement strategies, how the initiative is innovative and different to everyday business, program outcomes and evaluation. The overview may be used as your profile if your nomination is progressed as a finalist.

**Part Two - Responses to the Selection Criteria**: 400-word limit for each response.

**Part Three - Referees and Endorsement:**

**Referees** You are required to provide two referees. If you are successful in progressing as a shortlisted finalist, we will contact both referees.

* One of your referees must be your service coordinator/director, service provider/early years manager, a member of the committee of management or Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent).
* Second referees may be:
  + - senior colleagues, mentor or a member of the community who can provide detail on your nomination
    - Department of Education and Training employees, including regional staff, primary school teachers and principals.

**Endorsement** Your application requires electronic endorsement by your early childhood service/service provider director or Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent). Once you submit your application, a copy will be emailed for their endorsement.

## Supporting Parents to Build Their Capacity and Confidence Award

This award recognises **one or more** early childhood service and/or organisations that are taking action to support families, parents and carers to feel confident and capable in their parenting role and recognises their role as the first and most important teachers in supporting their child’s learning and development.

For example, initiatives may have a focus on:

* strengthening the role of families, parents and carers in delivery of the educational program, especially for those experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage
* strengthening the quality of relationships between parents and their children
* supporting the home learning environment through implementing evidence-based parenting programs.

The winner of this Award receives a grant of $15,000 towards their project or initiative.

*The winner of the* ***2020 Supporting Parents to Build Their Capacity and Confidence Award*** *was The Caring Mums program. Learn more about Caring Mums here:* [*https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/Pages/veya-winners-2020.aspx*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/Pages/veya-winners-2020.aspx)

#### Eligibility

This award is open to **one or more** early childhood organisations and services delivering projects, programs and initiatives that are improving outcomes for young children and their families. Eligible organisations may include (but are not limited to):

* early childhood education and care services and Early Years Management organisations
* primary schools
* local government services (e.g. family services, maternal and child health services)
* playgroups
* Best Start partnerships
* parenting services
* Aboriginal health organisations or cooperatives
* community service organisations and community health organisations.

Please note individuals are not eligible for this award category.

#### Selection Criteria

**Criterion 1: Outcomes for children and families**

How does the initiative improve outcomes for children and families?

Consider:

* Has the initiative been evaluated?
* How has the initiative improved outcomes for all children and families?
* How has the initiative improved outcomes for families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage?
* How does the initiative build the capacity of children, families, communities and/or organisations to support positive outcomes for children?

**Criterion 2: Evidence-based practice**

How does the initiative promote evidence-based practice?

Consider:

* What is the evidence base (theories and/or research) for the initiative?
* How is the initiative monitored to ensure ongoing quality improvement?

**Criterion 3: Innovative practice**

How does the initiative promote innovative practice?

Consider:

* How is the initiative different to expected everyday practice?
* How is the initiative demonstrating innovation in your local area?

**Criterion 4: Sustainability**

How is the initiative sustainable and transferable?

Consider:

* How is the initiative embedded into everyday practice?

#### How the judges will evaluate the applications

* The judges will look for clear and relevant examples of how the initiative demonstrates the key criteria of this award category.
* The judges will consider and review any independent evidence or research you provide in your application that shows why and how the initiative is a success.
* As the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) underpins all Victorian early childhood learning, you should reference how the initiative supports and implements the VEYLDF and its practice principles.
* The initiative should be more than just business as usual and be something innovative or ‘out of the box’.

**Here are some of the judging comments from last year’s Awards. These may help you in preparing your application.**

* *The applicant describes the theory base and cites evidence for the need of their initiative.*
* *The application provides a strong case for the program's sustainability.*
* *Applicant describes well the identified need/gap, consultations undertaken in the design, theory of change and external evaluation results.*
* *The applicant clearly articulates the difference between this service and what is available elsewhere.*

#### Application components

**There are three parts to the application:**

**Part One - Overview**: With a 400-word limit, the overview is not scored but should identify when the program commenced, how it links with the evidence base, key stages and achievements, community engagement strategies, how the initiative is innovative and different to everyday business, program outcomes and evaluation. The overview may be used as your profile if your nomination is progressed as a finalist.

**Part Two - Responses to the Selection Criteria**: 400-word limit for each response.

**Part Three - Referees and Endorsement:**

**Referees** You are required to provide two referees. If you are successful in progressing as a shortlisted finalist, we will contact both referees.

* One of your referees must be your service coordinator/director, early childhood service provider/early years manager, a member of the committee of management or Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent).
* Second referees may be:
  + - senior colleagues, mentor or a member of the community who can provide detail on your nomination
    - Department of Education and Training employees, including regional staff, primary school teachers and principals.

**Endorsement** Your application requires electronic endorsement by your early childhood service/service provider director or Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent). Once you submit your application, a copy will be emailed for their endorsement.

## Creating Collaborative Community Partnerships Award

This award recognises a collaborative partnership **between two or more** early childhood services and/or organisations, which are taking actions to promote collaborative practice that supports and demonstrate positive outcomes for children and families.

For example, initiatives may have a focus on:

* improving the integration and connections between early years and family services (for example, Maternal and Child Health, Child FIRST/family services, Child Protection and parenting services)
* providing collaborative wrap-around supports for children and families, particularly those experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage
* using local planning processes and information sharing to foster collaboration
* using research to develop partnerships that demonstrate outcomes for children.

The winner of this Award receives a grant of $15,000 towards their project or initiative.

*The winner of the* ***2020 Creating Collaborative Community Partnerships******Award*** *was By Five – Wimmera Southern Mallee (WSM) Specialist Pediatric Support Partnership (SPSP). Learn more about The Specialist Paediatric Support Partnership here* [*https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/Pages/veya-winners-2020.aspx*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/Pages/veya-winners-2020.aspx)

#### Eligibility

This award must be submitted on behalf of a collaborative partnership between **two or more** early childhood services and/or organisations.

Eligible organisations may include (but are not limited to):

* early childhood education and care services and Early Years Management organisations
* primary schools
* local government services (e.g. family services, maternal and child health services)
* playgroups
* Best Start partnerships
* parenting services
* Aboriginal health organisations or cooperatives
* community service organisations and community health organisations.

Please note individuals are not eligible for this award category.

#### Selection Criteria

**Criterion 1: Outcomes for children and families**

How does the initiative improve outcomes for children and families?

Consider:

* Has the initiative been evaluated?
* How has the initiative improved outcomes for all children and families?
* How has the initiative improved outcomes for families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage?
* How does the initiative build the capacity of children, families, communities and/or organisations to support positive outcomes for children?

**Criterion 2: Evidence-based practice**

How does the initiative promote evidence-based practice?

Consider:

* What is the evidence base (theories and/or research) for the initiative?
* How is the initiative monitored to ensure ongoing quality improvement?

**Criterion 3: Innovative practice**

How does the initiative promote innovative practice?

Consider:

* How is the initiative different to expected everyday practice?
* How is the initiative demonstrating innovation in your local area?

**Criterion 4: Sustainability**

How is the initiative sustainable and transferable?

Consider:

* How is the initiative embedded into everyday practice?

#### How the judges will evaluate the applications

* The judges will look for clear and relevant examples of how the initiative demonstrates the key criteria of this award category.
* The judges will consider and review any independent evidence or research you provide in your application that shows why and how the initiative is a success.
* As the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) underpins all Victorian early childhood learning, you should reference how the initiative supports and implements the VEYLDF and its practice principles.
* The initiative should be more than just business as usual and be something innovative or ‘out of the box’.

**Here are some of the judges’ comments from last year’s Awards. These may help you in preparing your application.**

* *The relationships in the initiative between professionals are building skills and maintaining currency of evidence-based approaches.*
* *The program has been developed with a strong evidence base in improved health and well-being and was trialled in a pilot*
* *Data has been recorded that demonstrates improvement in the vulnerability domains of children commencing school. Service providers and community are working together in co-designing resources for families.*
* *Sound early childhood and community development theories underpin the initiative. Shared data and measurement drive continuous improvement*.

#### Application components

**There are three parts to the application:**

**Part One - Overview**: With a 400-word limit, the overview is not scored but should identify when the program commenced, how it links with the evidence base, key stages and achievements, community engagement strategies, how the initiative is innovative and different to everyday business, program outcomes and evaluation. The overview may be used as your profile if your nomination is progressed as a finalist.

**Part Two - Responses to the Selection Criteria**: 400-word limit for each response.

**Part Three - Referees and Endorsement:**

**Referees** You are required to provide two referees. If you are successful in progressing as a shortlisted finalist, we will contact both referees.

* One of your referees must be your service coordinator/director, early childhood service/ early years manager, a member of the committee of management or Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent).
* Second referees may be:
  + - senior colleagues, mentor or a member of the community who can provide detail on your nomination
    - Department of Education and Training employees, including regional staff, primary school teachers and principals.

**Endorsement** Your application requires electronic endorsement by your early childhood service/service provider director or Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent). Once you submit your application, a copy will be emailed for their endorsement.

## Promoting Children’s Health and Wellbeing Award

This award recognises **one or more** early childhood service and/or organisations that is taking action to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for young children.

For example, initiatives may have a focus on:

* increasing access and engagement in health and wellbeing opportunities, particularly for those experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage
* aligning with current public health policy and practice (for example, the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023 and the Victorian Prevention and Health Promotion Achievement Program)
* creating physical environments that support the physical, social, and emotional health and wellbeing of young children and their families
* demonstrating innovative practice that is flexible and responsive to the health and wellbeing needs of children and families in their local communities
* using child consultation and children’s voices to inform the development of health initiatives
* building partnerships with families, health and wellbeing services, and other relevant community services.

The winner of this Award receives a grant of $15,000 towards their project or initiative.

*The winner of the* ***2020*** ***Promoting Children’s Health and Wellbeing Award*** *was Early Years Body Safety Superstars – Body Safety Australia. Learn more about Early Years Body Safety Superstars here* [*https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/Pages/veya-winners-2020.aspx*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/Pages/veya-winners-2020.aspx)

#### Eligibility

This award is open to early childhood organisations and services delivering projects, programs and initiatives that are improving outcomes for young children and their families. Eligible organisations may include (but are not limited to):

* early childhood education and care services and Early Years Management organisations
* primary schools
* local government services (e.g. family services, maternal and child health services)
* playgroups
* Best Start partnerships
* parenting services
* Aboriginal health organisations or cooperatives
* community service organisations and community health organisations.

Please note individuals are not eligible for this award category.

#### Selection Criteria

**Criterion 1: Outcomes for children and families**

How does the initiative improve outcomes for children and families?

Consider:

* Has the initiative been evaluated?
* How has the initiative improved outcomes for all children and families?
* How has the initiative improved outcomes for families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage?
* How does the initiative build the capacity of children, families, communities and/or organisations to support positive outcomes for children?

**Criterion 2: Evidence-based practice**

How does the initiative promote evidence-based practice?

Consider:

* What is the evidence base (theories and/or research) for the initiative?
* How is the initiative monitored to ensure ongoing quality improvement?

**Criterion 3: Innovative practice**

How does the initiative promote innovative practice?

Consider:

* How is the initiative different to expected everyday practice?
* How is the initiative demonstrating innovation in your local area?

**Criterion 4: Sustainability**

How is the initiative sustainable and transferable?

Consider:

* How is the initiative embedded into everyday practice?

#### How the judges will evaluate the applications

* The judges will look for clear and relevant examples of how the initiative demonstrates the key criteria of this award category.
* The judges will consider and review any independent evidence or research you provide in your application that shows why and how the initiative is a success.
* As the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) underpins all Victorian early childhood learning, you should reference how the initiative supports and implements the VEYLDF and its practice principles.
* The initiative should be more than just business as usual and be something innovative or ‘out of the box’.

**Here are some of the judging comments from last year’s Awards. These may help you in preparing your application.**

* *Evaluations have been completed and improvements in outcomes found.*
* *Clearly shows evidence of use of frameworks and curriculum to inform program. Regular feedback sought and program modified from this.*
* *Initiative empowers community to lead.*
* *Evidence base is well articulated. Continuous Quality Improvement based on usage data.*

#### Application components

**There are three parts to the application:**

**Part One - Overview**: With a 400-word limit, the overview is not scored but should identify when the program commenced, how it links with the evidence base, key stages and achievements, community engagement strategies, how the initiative is innovative and different to everyday business, program outcomes and evaluation. The overview may be used as your profile if your nomination is progressed as a finalist.

**Part Two - Responses to the Selection Criteria**: 400-word limit for each response.

**Part Three - Referees and Endorsement:**

**Referees** You are required to provide two referees. If you are successful in progressing as a shortlisted finalist, we will contact both referees.

* One of your referees must be your service coordinator/director, early childhood service provider/early years manager, a member of the committee of management or Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent).
* Second referees may be:
  + - senior colleagues, mentor or a member of the community who can provide detail on your nomination
    - Department of Education and Training employees, including regional staff, primary school teachers and principals.

**Endorsement** Your application requires electronic endorsement by your early childhood service/service provider director or Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent). Once you submit your application, a copy will be emailed for their endorsement.

## Continuity of Early Learning Award

This award recognises **two or more** early childhood services, schools and/or other organisations that support continuity of early learning through successful transitions.

For example, initiatives may have a focus on:

* using innovative approaches that are aligned with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework to support successful transitions between kindergarten and school for children
* transition to school practices that are flexible and responsive to individual children and families in their local communities, including those experiencing vulnerability and/or disadvantage
* strengthening the quality of reciprocal relationships between early childhood services and primary schools
* using child voice and agency and input from family to inform and guide successful transitions to school
* multi-disciplinary teams working together to achieve successful transitions for children (i.e. early childhood teachers, school teachers, early childhood intervention services, maternal and child health services and outside school hours care services).

The winner of this Award receives a grant of $15,000 towards their project or initiative.

*The winner of the* ***2020*** ***Continuity of Early Learning Award*** *was Buddy Reader Program – Leopold Child and Family Centre in partnership with Leopold Library and Leopold Primary School. Learn more about The Buddy Reader Program here* [*https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/Pages/veya-winners-2020.aspx*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/Pages/veya-winners-2020.aspx).

#### Eligibility

This award must be with **two or more** early childhood services, schools and/or other organisations that support continuity of early learning through successful transitions.

Eligible organisations may include (but are not limited to):

* early childhood education and care services and Early Years Management organisations
* primary schools
* local government services (e.g. family services, maternal and child health services)
* playgroups
* Best Start partnerships
* parenting services
* Aboriginal health organisations or cooperatives
* community service organisations and community health organisations.

Please note individuals are not eligible for this award category.

#### Selection Criteria

**Criterion 1: Outcomes for children and families**

How does the initiative improve outcomes for children and families?

Consider:

* Has the initiative been evaluated?
* How has the initiative improved outcomes for all children and families?
* How has the initiative improved outcomes for families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage?
* How does the initiative build the capacity of children, families, communities and/or organisations to support positive outcomes for children?

**Criterion 2: Evidence-based practice**

How does the initiative promote evidence-based practice?

Consider:

* What is the evidence base (theories and/or research) for the initiative?

How is the initiative monitored to ensure ongoing quality improvement

**Criterion 3: Innovative practice**

How does the initiative promote innovative practice?

Consider:

* How is the initiative different to expected everyday practice?
* How is the initiative demonstrating innovation in your local area?

**Criterion 4: Sustainability**

How is the initiative sustainable and transferable?

Consider:

* How is the initiative embedded into everyday practice?

#### How the judges will evaluate the applications

* The judges will look for clear and relevant examples of how the initiative demonstrates the key criteria of this award category.
* The judges will consider and review any independent evidence or research you provide in your application that shows why and how the initiative is a success.
* As the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) underpins all Victorian early childhood learning, you should reference how the initiative supports and implements the VEYLDF and its practice principles.
* The initiative should be more than just business as usual and be something innovative or ‘out of the box’.

**Here are some of the judging comments from last year’s Awards. These may help you in preparing your application.**

* *The program itself certainly uses innovative approaches aligned with the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) and seems to respond to the needs of a diverse community, including those experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage.*
* *It is clear that the program has improved outcomes for those involved both through their early literacy development as well as assisting the school in understanding how they can better support children with complex needs.*
* *The program clearly has a strong theoretical evidence base and the mechanisms to monitor the program and assist with quality improvement are well rounded and seem to be used in adapting the program.*
* *The sustainability of this initiative is strong. While the ease of implementation is impacted by the direct feeder nature of the kindergarten and school relationship, it would not be unreasonable to see this initiative being transferrable to other services in the system.*

## Early Childhood Teacher of the Year

This award recognises an early childhood teacher who has demonstrated evidence-based innovation and exemplary practice in early childhood education and care. Their nomination will demonstrate how they have made a significant contribution to the development and delivery of high-quality early childhood education programs and/or achieved significant improvements in children’s learning and development outcomes.

The winner of this Award receives a grant of $15,000 towards their professional development.

*The winner of the* ***2020 Early Childhood Teacher of the Year*** *Award was Jo Nunn. Learn more about the work Jo does here* [*https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/Pages/veya-winners-2020.aspx*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/Pages/veya-winners-2020.aspx)

#### Eligibility

Nominees for the Early Childhood Teacher of the Year Award must be:

* a provisional or fully registered early childhood teacher with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.
* Currently employed in a Victorian licensed children’s or approved education and care service that receives state government funding to provide a kindergarten program. Funded kindergarten programs can be delivered in stand-alone kindergartens, long day care centres and schools.

#### Selection Criteria

**Criterion 1: Award category requirements**

Provide a summary of why you believe you should receive the Early Childhood Teacher of the Year Award. (350 words)

Please note, **this** **response is scored** so include detailed information and evidence to support your nomination. We recommend you refer to the other criteria below, and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) principles, to support your nomination.

**Criterion 2: Professional knowledge and practice**

Detail how you draw on your professional knowledge and practice in how you work. (1200 words)

Consider:

* How do you communicate your educational philosophy and express how you support children’s learning?
* What do you draw from the VEYLDF in how you approach your role?
* How do you demonstrate implementation of early childhood theoretical knowledge?
* How do you demonstrate exemplary teaching practice to support children’s learning?

**Criterion 3: Professional engagement and commitment**

How do you demonstrate professional engagement and commitment to your role? (350 words)

Consider:

* How do you demonstrate commitment to ongoing professional learning?
* How do you contribute to educational debate within your service, network or community?

#### How the judges will evaluate the applications

* The judges will look for clear and relevant examples of how you demonstrate the key criteria of this award category.
* The judges will consider and review any independent evidence or research you provide in your application that shows why and how your practice is exemplary.
* As the VEYLDF underpins all Victorian early childhood learning, you should reference how you support and implement the VEYLDF and its practice principles.
* What you do should be more than just business as usual and be something innovative or ‘out of the box’.

**Here are some of the judging comments from last year’s Awards. These may help you in preparing your application.**

* *Strong priority on reflective practice in applicant’s work and engagement with other professionals and accessing coaching to work with the literacy tool kit. Highlights how the early years planning cycle is used to ensure applicant is responsive to what each child is ready to learn.*
* *Provides evidence for a range of professional learning opportunities that applicant has engaged in to deepen their knowledge of evidence-based teaching strategies and planning for and documentation of learning.*
* *Applicant demonstrated evidence that the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) strongly guides practice, linked to understanding the children's individual learning needs.*
* *The entire application demonstrates a continuous cycle of the learning by applicant for self, others and the children.*

#### Application components

**There are three parts to the application:**

**Part One- Responses to the Selection Criteria**: check allocated word limit for each response.

**Part Two - Referees and Endorsement:**

**Referees** You are required to provide two referees. If you are successful in progressing as a shortlisted finalist, we will contact both referees.

* One of your referees must be your service coordinator/director, service provider/early years manager, a member of the committee of management or Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent).
* Second referees may be:
  + - senior colleagues, mentor or a member of the community who can provide detail on your nomination
    - Department of Education and Training employees, including regional staff, primary school teachers and principals.

**Endorsement** Your application requires electronic endorsement by your early childhood service/service provider director or Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent). Once you submit your application, a copy will be emailed for their endorsement.

## The Emeritus Professor Collette Tayler Excellence in Educational Leadership Award

This award recognises an early childhood educational leader, early childhood service or an approved service provider that has led their educators and teachers to significantly improve the quality of their learning and teaching practices, with a focus on intentional teaching practices to achieve improved outcomes for Victorian children and their families.

The winner of this Award receives a grant of $15,000 towards their project or initiative (if they are an early childhood service or an approved service provider) or $15,000 towards their professional learning if they are an early childhood educational leader.

*The winner of the* ***2020******Emeritus Professor Collette Tayler Excellence in Educational Leadership Award*** *was Haileybury Early Learning Centre (ELC). Learn more about Haileybury ELC here* [*https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/Pages/veya-winners-2020.aspx*](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/awards/Pages/veya-winners-2020.aspx)

#### Eligibility

You must:

* be an early childhood service or an approved service provider who receives state government funding to deliver a kindergarten program. Funded kindergarten programs can be delivered in stand-alone kindergartens, long day care centres and schools.

OR

* be an educational leader who is employed at an early childhood service or an approved service provider who receives state government funding to deliver a kindergarten program. Note: An educational leader is the person nominated at each early years service under the National Quality Framework.

#### Selection Criteria

**Criterion 1: Leadership and professional knowledge and practice**

How does the educational leader, early childhood service or approved service provider demonstrate commitment to leadership and improving professional knowledge and practice?

Consider:

* What is the educational leader, early childhood service or approved service provider’s approach to educational leadership?
* How has the educational leader, early childhood service or approved service provider demonstrated commitment to ongoing quality improvement?
* How does the educational leader, early childhood service or approved service provider support the teaching practice of the educators in your service (or services) to be informed by theories of early childhood pedagogy, children’s learning and development and the practice principles of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework?
* How does the educational leader, early childhood service or approved service provider achieve exceptional teaching practice to support children’s learning?

**Criterion 2: Reflective practice and ongoing professional learning**

How does the educational leader, early childhood service or approved service provider undertake reflective practice and ongoing professional learning?

Consider:

* How has the educational leader, early childhood service or approved service provider supported the ongoing professional learning of educators and teachers?
* How has the educational leader, early childhood service or approved service provider shared and embedded learnings with all educators at the service or services?

**Criterion 3: Intentional teaching practices**

Detail the educational leader, early childhood service or approved provider's approach to the inclusion of intentional teaching practices.

Consider:

* How has the educational leader, early childhood service or approved service provider discussed, reviewed, implemented and measured the impact of intentional teaching practices in partnership with the educational team?

#### How the judges will evaluate the applications

* The judges will look for clear and relevant examples of how the initiative demonstrates the key criteria of this award category.
* The judges will consider and review any independent evidence or research you provide in your application that shows why and how the initiative is a success.
* As the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF) underpins all Victorian early childhood learning, you should reference how the initiative supports and implements the VEYLDF and its practice principles.
* The initiative should be more than just business as usual and be something innovative or ‘out of the box’.

**Here are some of the judging comments from last year’s Awards. These may help you in preparing your application.**

* *Aligns discussion to the local context and the children and families in the community and the educators within the service. It speaks to the continual development of educators to advance young children's learning and development.*
* *Applicant outlines professional development strategies for building team capacity and leadership skills of individual educators.*
* *Identifies critical reflection as a key approach to building leadership capabilities in teaching and learning. Professional practice is aligned to professional development.*

#### Application components

**There are three parts to the application:**

**Part One - Overview**: **For an early childhood service or approved service provider:** With a 400-word limit, the overview is not scored but should identify when the program commenced, how it links with the evidence base, key stages and achievements, community engagement strategies, how the initiative is innovative and different to everyday business, program outcomes and evaluation. The overview may be used as your profile if your nomination is progressed as a finalist.

**For an educational leader:** With a 400-word limit, the overview is not scored but should identify how the education leader links their work with an evidence base, key stages and achievements, community engagement strategies, how they use innovative and outline how what they do is different to everyday business. The overview may be used as your profile if your nomination is progressed as a finalist.

**Part Two - Responses to the Selection Criteria**: 400-word limit for each response.

**Part Three - Referees and Endorsement:**

**Referees** You are required to provide two referees. If you are successful in progressing as a shortlisted finalist, we will contact both referees.

* One of your referees must be your service coordinator/director, service provider/early years manager, a member of the committee of management or Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent).
* Second referees may be:
  + - senior colleagues, mentor or a member of the community who can provide detail on your nomination
    - Department of Education and Training employees, including regional staff, primary school teachers and principals.

**Endorsement** Your application requires electronic endorsement by your early childhood service/service provider director or Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent). Once you submit your application, a copy will be emailed for their endorsement.

# Assessment process

## Shortlisting

Nominations will be shortlisted by program area experts and regional colleagues where required. This is a preliminary screening only and is used to determine that the nominations:

* are fully completed and meet the eligibility criteria for their category
* present no probity concerns, such as perceived conflicts of interest or ethical concerns
* are not promoting activities that do not align with the VEYLDF and educational practice quality standards.

All applicants that have addressed the required criteria and the above screening process will progress past the shortlisting round to be assessed by the judging panel.

## Judging

Judging panels are chaired by an impartial moderator and comprised of Department of Education and Training representatives, early childhood experts and academics.

Judging panels will independently judge each award category. Judges use the matrix below to score each criterion.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Label** | **Description** |
| 1 | **Unsatisfactory** | * did not meet the selection criterion **and** * lacked evidence to support nomination |
| 2 | **Satisfactory** | * met the selection criterion **and** * provided some evidence to support nomination against criterion |
| 3 | **Good** | * met the selection criterion **and** * provided good evidence to support nomination against some criterion |
| 4 | **Very good** | * met selection criterion **and** * provided good evidence to support nomination against each criterion |
| 5 | **Excellent** | * met all selection criterion **and** * provided strong evidence against each criterion |
| 6 | **Outstanding** | * met all selection criterion **and** * provided outstanding evidence against each criterion |

The Panel may request additional supporting documentation or information from the applicant as part of the judging criteria to assist in their assessment of an application against the specified criteria.

If the Panel decides there are no nominations in an award category that sufficiently meet the selection criteria, no award will be presented in that category.

Please note that while attachments to support your nomination are permitted, only information included in the nomination will be assessed. Please ensure that all information you wish to be considered is captured within your nomination. To assist the Panel, please provide enough description or examples in the nomination to clearly demonstrate the key strengths of the initiative.

Following the judging process, the referees of the application may be contacted to provide a reference check via phone at a suitable time.

The decision of the Panel is final and no review process will be undertaken. All applicants will be notified via email of the outcome of their nomination. All finalists will be published on the Department’s website.

# Further information

If you have any queries in regard to the 2021 Victorian Early Years Awards, including eligibility, categories, process and the online platform, please email: [early.years.awards@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:early.years.awards@education.vic.gov.au)

For information on previous award winners, please visit [www.education.vic.gov.au/earlyyearsawards](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/earlyyearsawards)

# Resources

Please refer to any of the resources listed below when preparing your application form to support your nomination.

**The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework**

[The Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/learning/Pages/veyldf.aspx) supports all professionals who work with children aged 0-8. It includes a range of discipline-specific guidelines and practice resources.

**National Quality Framework**

[The National Quality Framework](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about) is Australia’s system for regulating early learning and school age care and seeks to improve education and care across long day care, family day care, kindergarten services and outside school hours care services.

**Transition to School Resource Kit**

[The Transition to School Resource Kit](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/professionals/learning/Pages/transkit.aspx) includes practical guidance for early childhood professionals working with children and families while they transition to school.

**Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority Assessment and Practice Guides**

[The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority Assessment (VCAAA) and Practice Guides](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/earlyyears/ey-curriculum-resources/Pages/Birth-to-8years.aspx) provide scenarios and learning activities to support engagement with key concepts of the VEYLDF.

**Early Years Planning Cycle Resource for the VEYLDF**

[The Planning Cycle Resource](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/curriculum/earlyyears/ey-curriculum-resources/Pages/EarlyYearsPlanningCycleResource.aspx) has been designed to demonstrate how the VEYLDF Early Years Planning Cycle can be applied to observe, assess and respond to evidence of children's learning and illustrate and provide a model for the teaching of specific concepts to children aged from birth to eight years within everyday learning environment.

**Australian Professional Standards for Teachers**

[The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/standards) consist of seven standards, which teachers will meet at differing levels depending on their career stage and level of experience.

**Victorian Curriculum F-10**

[The Victorian Curriculum F–10](https://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/) sets out what every student should learn during their first eleven years of schooling. The curriculum is the common set of knowledge and skills required by students for life-long learning, social development and active and informed citizenship.

**My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia**

[My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-05/my_time_our_place_framework_for_school_age_care_in_australia_0.pdf) is the approved national framework for school age care to be used by school age care educators, including outside school hours care services.

**Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016 - 2026**

[The Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016–2026](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/aboriginal/Marrung_Aboriginal_Education_Plan_2016-2026.pdf)is a strategy to ensure all Koorie Victorians achieve their learning aspirations from early childhood through to school.